

Parents must hatch a plan to get 2016's top toy

SHELLEY SEID

PARENTS are scrambling for the world's most wanted Christmas toy — an egg.

The Hatchimal, a speckled toy egg that hatches to produce one of five bird-like species, has sold out worldwide.

Online scalpers are reselling the furry animatronic creatures for up to 10 times the retail price.

One eBay seller demands £48 000 (R858 418) plus shipping versus the standard retail price of \$60 (R868).

For South African parents, this is no yolk.

"We all underestimated the power of the Hatchimal," says Nicole Annells, marketing manager of Toys R Us SA. "It's a relatively high-priced item [retailing for just under

R1 000]. We knew it was going to do well but hadn't anticipated the sell through. All the stock was gone within days."

Annells says Toys R Us SA imported most of the stock.

The Hatchimal is one of the latest in a string of interactive tech toys.

The large plastic egg reacts only when stroked, held or played with.

There is a choice of five birdlike creatures. After hatching, the toy has three "life stages", and can be reset to revert to baby stage.

Annells says there is a huge focus on tech toys this year, from the high-end Zoomer Chimp for R3 000 to the Furby at a cool R2 000.

Spin Master Corp, the Canadian company that created the Hatchimal and the Zoomer brand of robotic animals, the Build-a-Bear Work-

shop and Tamagotchi, says it is surprised by the response.

The toy took two years to develop, and was aimed at girls aged six to eight, but is a surprise hit with boys and older children.

Author and creative parenting

expert Nicki Bush is not surprised by the toy's success, and says it is a welcome alternative to a world filled with war and weaponry.

"The toy is about nurturing and love," she says. "It's akin to birthing a child, the exact opposite of destruction. Kids have to nurture the egg sufficiently to get it to hatch. They need to be gentle."

"When it hatches, it has googly eyes and makes silly little sounds in response to its owner. Like a baby, it needs bonding and love to move through its life stages. It can learn to talk, to walk, to dance."

"I watched a child carrying one around just like a mother would carry a baby. It has touched a deep emotional cord that makes people feel safe and secure in a world where we feel threatened."

All the stock was gone within days

IT'S MORPHIN' TIME!



Performers dressed as characters from the children's television show 'Power Rangers' prepare to take part in the Christmas Toy Parade organised by toy shop Hamleys, on Regent Street, London, yesterday. Hamleys was established in 1760

Picture: AFP PHOTO

Aussies looking for love in the outback say 'balls' to Tinder

PICK-UP trucks, cowboy boots and a 24-hour booze-fuelled party in the outback: welcome to modern-day dating in Australia's bush, where swiping right is not an option.

For single men and women on remote farms or in tiny villages, "Bachelor and Spinster" balls offer a better chance of finding love than dating apps like Tinder.

The balls, a decades-old tradition in outback Australia, still attract

thousands of young adults looking for love — or to get rolling drunk.

"It's very old-school," said Emily Pitt, a 24-year-old from the town of Gulgong. "It's how country singles meet each other."

Ariah Park, some 400km west of Sydney, has a population of just 500. But on the last Saturday of October the village is inundated with pick-up trucks, which roar up to a dried-out paddock to deposit partygoers.

About 1 500 people showed up for this year's outdoor drinking and dancing extravaganza, the second-biggest turnout in the event's 32-year history.

While the ball has a black-tie dress code, the warm-up party is a casual affair, with people wearing scruffy T-shirts, shorts and flip-flops and drinking heavily.

When night falls partygoers change into their formal attire and

pack into a marquee where they stomp their boots and toss their cowboy hats into the air as they dance to country rock tunes.

The balls are notorious for binge drinking, casual sex and dangerous driving antics.

Ariah Park revellers get unlimited alcohol for their Aus\$120 (R1 275) entry ticket and a goody bag that includes a plastic beer cup and a condom. — AFP

Malls gear up for Black Friday

MONICA LAGANPARSAD

THE countdown to Black Friday has begun.

And retailers across the country are preparing for an influx of shoppers on the busiest shopping day of the year.

Malls around the country have stocked up, added more parking and beefed up security for the expected Christmas bargain rush.

Black Friday, which began in the US, is relatively new in South Africa, but over the past three years retailers have recorded a spike in sales of more than 200%.

Menlyn Park mall in Pretoria is expecting at least 100 000 customers on the day.

Spokesman Karina van den Heever said the centre was holding its second Black Friday after last year's proved to be highly successful.

"We have extra security and extended shopping hours," she said.

The R2.5-billion revamped centre, she said, was ready for the mayhem and would re-open on Thursday.

She said that to ensure a pleasant shopping experience the centre had introduced a park-and-ride service at the Glenstantia Primary School from November 24 to 27. The service will run every half hour from 8am to 5pm.

Shopping hours at the mall will be extended to 9pm from November 24.

Major retailers such as Game, Samsung and Makro are offering discounts throughout the weekend.

Gamers can also cash in on

If the crowds are too much, online sites are also cashing in

Xbox One deals. Microsoft, manufacturer of the console, announced it would offer discounted Xbox One bundle deals for R3 999, which include the console and a game, such as FIFA 17. The console usually sells for about R5 000.

And if the crowds are too much to handle, online sites are also cashing in.

Takealot is calling its discount weekend the Blue Dot Sale.

Julie-Ann Walsh, chief marketing officer of Takealot, said that last year's sale showed growth of more than 200%.

She gave the assurance that the site was ready to handle the surge in web traffic.

"We have 10 000 products and discounts of up to 60%. There are some discounts of 80%," she said.

INFANTS who nurse during vaccinations may cry less and feel less pain than babies who are soothed in other ways, a research review suggests.

Researchers examined data on breastfeeding and infant pain during needle sticks from 10 previously published studies, with a total of 1 066 babies aged between one

Breastfeeding may numb needle pain for babies

and 12 months. On average, breastfeeding babies cried for 38 seconds less than babies who did not nurse during vaccinations, researchers reported in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews.

Pain scores based on observa-

tions of the behaviour of babies were also lower when infants were breastfed during needle sticks.

"We already knew that breastfeeding reduced pain during blood collection in newborn babies," said lead study author Denise Harrison,

a researcher at the University of Ottawa and Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Canada.

"However, we did not know if the same effects would be evident in older babies."

To assess the potential for breast-

feeding to curb pain in babies after the first month of life, researchers analysed data from studies that compared nursing to alternative pain-relief methods, such as bottles of formula, dummies, cuddling and skin-to-skin contact. Previous studies looked at a variety of needle-stick procedures in addition to vaccinations. — Reuters